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# The Staging of the Self - The Theatre and Hélène Cixous

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The work of Hélène Cixous reflects an unremitting engagement with the representation of subjectivity and intersubjective relationships, proffering ‘...possibilities of social and subjective transformations’.<sup>1</sup> This engagement is central to Cixous’ theatre, and indeed developments in Cixous’ representation of the self and other can be charted through her theatre.

In *The Newly Born Woman*, Cixous’ critique of Western culture is founded upon an analysis of its construction of difference in terms of hierarchised binaries.<sup>2</sup> She subsequently decries the Hegelian dialectic as a ‘merciless vicious circle’<sup>3</sup> in its inability to tolerate the existence of an equal other. The re-conception of difference is fundamental to the political projections of Cixous’ work, encouraging a focus on plurality and exchange, and resulting in an acceptance of alterity within the self.

A fundamental aspect of Cixous’ thought is the positing of writing as the site in which the dominant discourses of subjectivity can be challenged:

Everyone knows that a place exists which is not bound economically, politically, to all these depths and compromises. One which is not bound to reproduce the system. This place is writing. If there is an elsewhere which can escape infernal repetition, it’s in this direction, where it writes itself, where it dreams, where it invents new worlds.<sup>4</sup>

The other with whom Cixous is specifically concerned in this text is woman, defined as immutably other by Western patriarchal culture and to whom subjectivity is denied. She appeals to women to inscribe their subjectivity through the liberating medium of writing. These passages from *The Newly Born Woman* are important as a starting point for a discussion of Cixous' work on subjectivity. Yet they are arguably more relevant here through their reliance upon spatial metaphors which prefigure her explicit adoption of the theatre as generically suited to the representation of alterity:

Thus I am searching for [...] a scene where a different type of exchange would be produced [...] There would be recognition of one by the other, and this recognition would take place thanks to an intense and passionate process of understanding/consciousness: at last each would accept the risk of the *other*, of difference, without feeling threatened by the presence of this alterity instead rejoicing in the addition of the unfamiliar to the self and what is discovered, respected, encouraged and supported in that encounter.<sup>5</sup>

Cixous insists that the acceptance of the other within the self, and the consequent projection of a plural self are fundamental to any project of writing.<sup>6</sup> She refers both to the plurality of her own self<sup>7</sup> and the acute awareness of this plurality as it is enacted in writing:

Writing is the passage, entrance, exit, stay within me, of the other which I am and am not [...] of an uncertainty which acts as an obstacle to the socialisation of the subject.<sup>8</sup>

The theatrical form has come to occupy a position of centrality in Cixous' aesthetics. This centrality can be viewed as strategic. However, her early work on the theatre did not represent the form as at all apposite to the representation of alterity. Her first essay on theatre, 'Going to the Sea/ the mother'<sup>9</sup> constitutes a critique of the representation of the feminine in the theatre and attacks the theatrical form itself as governed by patriarchal structures of voyeurism and exhibitionism which exclude the representation of the female subject. Cixous defined her engagement with the theatre as politically motivated, as forming a continuum with her demands in *The Newly Born Woman*, and as founded in her desire to formulate

representations of the female desiring subject.<sup>10</sup>

Her desire to reveal and represent the repression of the female subject informs her early theatre. The plays *Portrait of Dora*<sup>11</sup> and *The Name of Oedipus. The Song of the Forbidden Body*<sup>12</sup> stage subjectivity itself as a central theme. Both plays are complex works which explicitly evoke the intertexts of Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis, whilst challenging the dominant role of the specular in the construction of identity in the theatre. Following this reclamation of the previously hostile genre of theatre to allow the representation of a specific other, that of the female subject, Cixous' approach to theatre evolves and allows her to specify theatre as a potential site and medium (analogous to the site of writing in *The Newly Born Woman*) in which dominant representations of subjectivity can be challenged.

Cixous' increased interest in the potential of theatre as form was reflected in the accompaniment of her next two published plays by a series of essays which constitute the main body of her thought on the theatre. The two major plays, *The Indiad or the India of their dreams*<sup>13</sup> and *The terrible but unfinished story of Norodom Sihanouk, King of Cambodia*,<sup>14</sup> have been perceived as signalling a shift in Cixous' aesthetic focus, a transition variously described as moving from the personal to the epic, from the self to the world, or from 'her story' to History. However, it is in the essays which accompany these plays that developments in Cixous' discussion of subjectivity become most apparent; the plays can be seen to act as an illustration and projection of these changes.<sup>15</sup>

Cixous claims that the theatre's potential as a site for new representations of subjectivity originates in a restructuring of the authorial self which is necessary when writing for the theatre.<sup>16</sup> If her 'fictions' reflect a move towards a *connaissance* of the self (an exploration of its plurality and state of flux), she presents her writing for the theatre as an explicit and progressive movement from the self towards the other:

I had to write several texts to put the rooms in order and to appease/pacify the self. Once peace has been won... we can hope that the self will be silent and leave space for the world. [...] Let it withdraw until almost erased, and the

huge empty beach on which it performed its noisy exercises  
will return at last to other hosts, to the non-me, to passers-  
by, to humanity.  
So enter the Others! I have the honour of being the scene/  
stage of the other.<sup>17</sup>

Cixous suggests that the process of writing for the theatre entails a reformulation of intersubjective relationships in which the authorial self is displaced. This displacement however rewards the author with the 'delirious consolation'<sup>18</sup> of finding her self multiplied through the characters of the play. Cixous asserts that the dominance of the authorial self is inevitably undermined when writing for the theatre; the self becomes the site of the other:

To reach it [the theatre] you have to reach this state of  
"selflessness",<sup>19</sup> this state of un-self, of dispossession of  
the self, which will make possible the possession of the  
author by the characters.<sup>20</sup>

The authorial self is demoted and spatialised: 'You can only arrive at the theatre with a self which has almost disappeared, which has been transformed into space [...]'<sup>21</sup> becoming '[...] not the hero of the scene, but the scene itself: the place, the opportunity of the other.'<sup>22</sup>

Cixous extends her emphasis on the theatre as site of the other by evoking parallel movements towards the other in the roles of both the actor and the spectator. She describes the actor's art:

What fearsome delight when he finds himself other!  
[...] I recognise my trembling journey in that of the actors.  
Acrobatic, the actors leap over the void left by the self.  
Such detachment from the self to meet the other to whom  
you give yourself over completely...<sup>23</sup>

Cixous values the spectator's experience of theatre because of the possible identification with the other. Positioning herself as audience in the context of *The Indiad*, she claims:

[...] if I can displace myself as far as India, and into  
strangers, that signifies that we are not so separate and  
impermeable as all that. We are sparks from the same fire.<sup>24</sup>

In Artaudian discourse, Cixous expresses the hope that identification with the other will render the spectator conscious of their common humanity, mortality and 'heroic' potential.

However, such utopian assertions of the power of the theatre to enable us to realise and reformulate intersubjective relationships fail to address Cixous' earlier condemnation of the power structures in force in theatrical representation; neither the possible repression nor the equality of the other is seemingly any longer at stake. The state of 'selflessness' attained by author, actor and spectator would seem to entail a loss of specificity. Her discourse no longer engages with the representation and identification of women in the theatre which was fundamental to the project of 'Going to the sea/ the mother', and we witness no problematisation of identification for the gendered spectator with an ungendered common humanity.<sup>25</sup>

This loss of gender specificity enables Cixous to create male characters for the theatre, something she claims was unattainable in her fictions due to her ignorance of the masculine libidinal economy. Theatre is described as revealing that 'the human heart has no sex'.<sup>26</sup> Sexual difference is to be established and inscribed through the physical presence of the actors as Cixous seems to be locating sexual difference at the level of anatomy, rather than that of libidinal economy: '...this I don't need to write. The actor, or actress gives us the body that we do not need to invent. And everything is authentic, everything is real.'<sup>27</sup> Such reliance on concepts of authenticity and anatomy is far removed from the political project of *The Newly Born Woman* which indeed works to denounce and undermine their prominence.

The two plays commonly associated with this stage of Cixous' work, *The Indiad or the India of their dreams* and *The terrible but unfinished story of Norodom Sihanouk King of Cambodia* raise serious questions as to the radical nature of their portrayal of the other. Both plays clearly attempt to mobilise recent historical narratives (the partition of India and the struggle for the political control of Cambodia) as allegories of the dangers of the intolerance and repression of the other and posit alternative intersubjective economies. Whilst recognising that any allegorisation of

such specific narratives (especially when enacted by and for different cultural and political audiences) is problematic, the representation of alterity in Cixous' plays would seem to contradict her claimed intentions.

In statements which remain naïve and paradoxically colonialist in nature, Cixous claims an affinity between India and the theatre: 'Indians, whether modest or boastful, possess an amazing directness. The whole of India is a theatre'.<sup>28</sup> She proceeds further to employ India as a desired aspect of subjectivity: 'Theatre can give us back our true dimensions, our depths, our heights, our interior Indias'.<sup>29</sup> Cixous evokes an essentialised concept of the 'Indian self' which serves to symbolise an alternative economy of difference, yet also succeeds in effacing difference through the overdetermination of poetic allegory and the dominance of authorial voice. Jennifer Birkett points out the irony of such dominance in the context of Cixous' earlier writing on the need to liberate the theatre for women:

What becomes of history in this play is what becomes of the feminine subject in patriarchal discourse. Colonised, expropriated, made up and made over into the mirror of more powerful others [...]<sup>30</sup>

Birkett's description of history is to be understood as the multitude of voices which are not permitted to contest Cixous' clear authorial identification, here with Gandhi, and the metaphorisation of the other. Representations of otherness within the plays are ultimately homogenised by the dominance of the recognisable authorial voice of Cixous. Cixous succeeds in projecting her own self through a multiplicity of characters yet fails to convincingly portray alterity on stage. Otherness is recuperated in order to provide suitable allegories for constructions of subjectivity; India and its partition becomes an extended metaphor for the dangers of dominant, divisive structures of subjectivity. Difference is anodyne and, ironically, is rendered apolitical as Anne-Marie Picard notes:

[...] [*The Indiad's*] avoidance of the burning question of alterity; a sexed, raced, social and economic alterity which is diffused into pretty clouds during the escape to the "platonic" skies of light blue pantheism [...] Differences are made but mere phenomena, incidents due to chance, variable forms animated by the divine will.<sup>31</sup>

Cixous' play becomes an ironic reflection upon her own denunciation of the representation of the other in Western culture which she describes in *The Newly Born Woman*: 'The other is present only to be reappropriated, retaken, its otherness destroyed.'<sup>32</sup> Cixous' dramatic allegorisation of the partition of India does not only essentialise and homogenise subjectivity through the concept of the 'Indian self', but insists upon the fixity of this other, frozen and recuperated within poetic allegory.

In Hegelian terms, the establishment of an immutable other precedes a corresponding reinforcement of the self. Indeed, Cixous' most recent theatre displays a shift in focus from representations of alterity to an exploration of the relationship between the authorial self and the theatre. *The Story (that we will never know)*<sup>33</sup> presents the staging of the scene of writing itself and the dramatisation of the writing self.<sup>34</sup> The play can be read as a problematisation of the inherent tensions between Cixous' adoption of the theatre as a privileged site of the other and the projection of the authorial self.

The Heideggerian concept of the poet as purveyor of truths has become increasingly prominent in Cixous' writing and this play focuses on a poet's search for a meta-narrative, a lost story. The thirteenth-century Icelandic poet Snorri Sturlusson is commanded by the nordic gods to write them a narrative of vengeance and murder and, to this end, is transported through time to find himself amidst the events of the saga of the Niebelungen.

Sturlusson, as poet, is thus participant in the unfolding narrative and capable of altering the course of events, but is charged with the interpretation and delivery of a closed narrative. The projection of Sturlusson into this other scene represents an explicit insertion of the writing self and authorial voice into both the scene of writing (the need to reconstruct the narrative) and the scene of the theatre which he experiences in its temporal and spatial immediacy. Sturlusson does not possess creative omniscience, and dramatic tension is maintained in the play as he attempts to both observe and participate in the narrative. His dilemma is foregrounded in Cixous' programme notes:



What the poet wants is to find the truth. But in searching for it, he sees himself caught up in the web he watches unfolding. The past which was his object of desire gives way to the present [...] here he is a character in the narrative he hoped to recount. The story/history he hoped to tell seizes him and makes off with him.<sup>35</sup>

*The Story (which we will never know)* thus deconstructs the scene of writing, the process of narrative itself - but persists in embellishing the mythologisation of the poet-self.

A discussion of this play as engaging with issues of writing and subjectivity must centre on the association of Sturlusson, the poet self, with an archetypal other - Barout, the wandering rabbi.<sup>36</sup> The association of the tropes of exile and Jewishness with the poet figure stem from the projection of an authorial autobiography and can be found throughout Cixous' work. The association between Barout and Sturlusson is explicit in the play as demonstrated in the ambiguity of Sturlusson's response in the following exchange:

Barout:

Between you and I, Snorri Sturlusson, I believe I heard an obscure music of compassion pass between those women.

Snorri:

Between us, Barout, I thought I heard it too.<sup>37</sup>

Sturlusson refuses to bow to pressure from the gods to deliver a narrative of division and repression, and enlists the rabbi's help in rewriting the scene and attempting to avert the tragic dénouement:

Snorri:

Rabbi, do you want to help me restart the world?

Rabbi:

If that is God's will.<sup>38</sup>

Cixous projects the presence and acceptance of the other (Barout) as fundamental to the creative process, as necessary to any recuperation of the narrative or, implicitly, of History. However, the rabbi, Barout, departs violently from the scene as he is murdered by Sturlusson in a fit of rage.

Barout's fate could arguably be read as an, albeit simplistic, allegorisation of the fate of the Jew in history/narrative. Yet a reading of the murder scene in the context of the relationship between the self and writing is more rewarding.

Sturlusson's anger is roused by the loss of his written text which is delaying his departure from a narrative he considers closed. This represents an attempt to appropriate the narrative, to assert authorial voice and attain textual fixity within the flux of dramatic narrative. Sturlusson exclaims:

Snorri:

My manuscripts! My story has been stolen from me! Help!  
My work is my flesh, they have stolen my organs, my  
heart, my brain!

Arminius:

Look at the rabbi, sitting over there, in front of the fire.  
What is he holding in his hands?

Snorri:

Him!? And you Barout, you have done this, to me!?'<sup>39</sup>

The dominant use of the possessive pronouns in Sturlusson's speech defines the mood of appropriation and division which is further heightened by his naming of the rabbi as other. In *The Newly Born Woman*, Cixous invokes the trope of property and possession as inherent in limited and repressive definitions of otherness: '[...] the distinction between the self-same, what is mine and therefore good/goods, and that which limits or threatens my good/s.'<sup>40</sup> The passage in which this description appears is appropriately titled 'The Murder of the Other.' Sturlusson is devastated by his unplanned yet fatal actions which he describes in terms of a self-mutilation, and it is at this point that Sturlusson loses the authorial control of the narrative that he had attempted to assert by possessing the text. Indeed he renounces all idea of control:

Snorri:

How tired I am of thinking of us  
Violent human beings [...]  
Our mysteries are too inaccessible  
And I no longer even know who is the main character  
Of my narrative.<sup>41</sup>

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Sturlusson is murdered by one of the principal characters of the play, yet remains on the scene to assist in the avoidance of the tragic ending:

Snorri:  
 Here is my night, everything has been said.  
 On my deserted path/journey,<sup>42</sup> there are no kings, nor  
 queens, nor fathers.  
 At last I will rest.<sup>43</sup>

Cixous may intend us to read Sturlusson's murder as the symbolic death of the author, the denial of narrative control and authority, brought about in part by the murder of the other, Barout. Authorial voice within Sturlusson's lost narrative has been undermined, yet the play in which he remains a principal character continues. Cixous' essays on the theatre insist on a generic distinction; the difference between the writing of fictions and writing for the theatre. In *The Story (which we will never know)*, writing is no longer presented as an unproblematic site of cohabitation for self and other. The authorial voice and the inevitable appropriation of the narrative are shown to preclude unequivocal openness and equal exchange between self and other. Cixous juxtaposes writing with theatre, dramatising the death of the author and the impossible search for a narrative.

Yet Sturlusson does not leave the scene. He continues to influence the progression of the narrative and to act as the author figure within the play. His final words constitute a lament that his text is lost and that the story will remain unwritten: 'No one will ever tell our story'.<sup>44</sup> The final words of the play serve ironically to remind the audience of the scene of writing rather than that of the theatre. Sturlusson, the powerless author figure on the stage, refers implicitly to a higher authority; that of Cixous, the author of the theatre which surpasses his text. This final acknowledgement undermines emphasis on the death of the author, whilst the death of the other remains unrehabilitated; Barout is noticeably absent and does not return to witness the final dénouement.

Cixous' theatre has moved from political assertions of the narrative of the other towards an engagement in representations and metaphorisations of the other which serve primarily to articulate and represent the self. In *The Story (which we will never know)*, theatre becomes less the utopian

site of alterity, rather a site of projection for the authorial self, a self which the very narrative leads us to.<sup>45</sup> Cixous described the displacement of the authorial self as liberating and inevitable when writing for the theatre. Yet her recent plays relocate the authorial self within the theatre through the recuperation of alterity in allegory, the abstracted fixity of the other serving to define the authorial self.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Morag Shiach, *Hélène Cixous. A Politics of Writing* (London and New York, Routledge, 1991), p.69.

<sup>2</sup> Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clement, *La Jeune Née* (Paris, Union Générale des Editions, 1975). All translations are mine unless otherwise stated.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p.144.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, pp.131-132:

Tout le monde sait qu'il existe un lieu qui n'est pas obligé économiquement, politiquement, à toutes les bassesses et tous les compromis. Qui n'est pas obligé de reproduire le système. Et c'est l'écriture. S'il y a un ailleurs qui peut échapper à la répétition infernale, c'est pas là, où ça rêve, où ça invente les nouveaux mondes.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, pp.143-144:

Je cherche donc [...] une scène où se produirait un type d'échange qui serait différent [...] Il y aurait...reconnaissance de l'un par l'autre, et cette reconnaissance se ferait grâce à un intense et passionné travail de connaissance: chacun prendrait enfin le risque de l'autre, de la différence, sans se sentir menacé(e) par l'existence d'une altérité, mais en se réjouissant de s'augmenter d'inconnu à découvrir, à respecter, à favoriser, à entretenir.

<sup>6</sup> This insistence leads to a call for the revalorisation of the concept of bisexuality as one which accepts the presence of the differently gendered other within the self.

<sup>7</sup> '...the concert of personalisations which call themselves I.' *ibid.*, p.154.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, p.158:

L'écriture, c'est en moi le passage, entrée, sortie, séjour,  
de l'autre que je suis et ne suis pas [...] d'incertitude qui  
font obstacle à la socialisation du sujet.

<sup>9</sup> Hélène Cixous, 'Aller à la mer', *Le Monde*, April 28, 1977. In the French 'la mer' signifies the sea, yet the mother 'la mère' is clearly consciously evoked.

<sup>10</sup> Hélène Cixous, 'Aller à la mer':

Going to the theatre now, has to be undertaken politically,  
with the aim of changing [...] its modes of production and  
expression. Time at last for women to return to the theatre,  
its chance, its *raison d'être*, its difference [...]

<sup>11</sup> Hélène Cixous, 'Portrait de Dora' in *Théâtre* (Paris, des femmes, 1976).

<sup>12</sup> Hélène Cixous, *Le Nom d'Oedipe. Chant du corps interdit* (Paris, des femmes, 1978).

<sup>13</sup> Hélène Cixous, *L'Indiade ou l'Inde de leurs rêves*, (Paris, Théâtre du soleil, 1987).

<sup>14</sup> Hélène Cixous, *L'Histoire terrible mais inachevée de Norodom Sihanouk, roi du Cambodge*, (Paris, Théâtre du soleil, 1987).

<sup>15</sup> The very presence of the essays alongside the plays encourages both a problematisation of the status of the performed text and highlights Cixous' control over productions of her plays. It is a further demonstration of Cixous' relationship with theatre as both site of inspiration and exposition of her aesthetics.

<sup>16</sup> The ultimate goal of the effacement of the self is also expressed in other areas of Cixous' writing, notably in her work on the Brazilian writer Clarice Lispector. Cixous praises Lispector's representation of

the other which clearly influences her to claim that '[...] it is the dream of every author to arrive at [such] a transfiguration of the self [...]' Hélène Cixous, 'The author in truth' in D. Jenson (ed) *Coming to Writing and other Essays* (Harvard, Harvard University Press, 1991), pp.136-181.

<sup>17</sup>Hélène Cixous, 'L'Incarnation' in *L'Indiade ou L'Inde de leurs rêves* (Paris, Théâtre du Soleil, 1987), p.260:

J'ai dû écrire quelques textes pour ordonner les chambres et apaiser le moi. Une fois la paix obtenue, dans l'oeuvre comme dans la vie, on peut espérer que le moi va faire silence, laisser le terrain au monde. [...] qu'il s'éloigne jusqu'à l'effacement, et l'immense plage nue sur laquelle il faisait ses bruyants exercices revient enfin aux hôtes étrangers, au non-moi, aux passants, à l'humanité. Entrent alors les Autres! J'ai l'honneur d'être la scène de l'autre.

<sup>18</sup>Hélène Cixous, 'L'Incarnation' in *L'Indiade ou L'Inde de leurs rêves et quelques écrits sur le théâtre*, p.265.

<sup>19</sup>In the French the Cixousian neologism of *démoïsation* conjures other linguistic associations, notably those of *moisir* to stagnate, thus *démoisir* to free, to make fluid, and *moisson* - harvest - the archetypal celebration of abundance.

<sup>20</sup>Hélène Cixous, 'De la scène de l'Inconscient à la scène de l'Histoire. Chemin d'une écriture' in Rossum-Guyon and Diaz-Diocaretz (eds), *Hélène Cixous, chemins d'une écriture*, (Vincennes, Presses Universitaires de Vincennes, 1990), pp.15-34 (p.28):

Pour y parvenir il faut parvenir à cet état de "démoïsation", cet état de sans-moi, de dépossession du moi, qui va rendre possible la possession de l'auteur par les personnages.

<sup>21</sup>ibid., p.24: 'Au théâtre on ne peut arriver qu'avec un moi qui s'est presque volatisé, qui s'est transformé en espace [...]'

<sup>22</sup>ibid., p.25: '[...] non pas le héros de la scène, mais la scène même: le lieu, l'occasion de l'autre.'

<sup>23</sup>Hélène Cixous, 'L'Incarnation', p.265:

Quel bonheur effrayé quand il se trouve autre!  
... je retrouve mon voyage tremblant dans celui des  
comédiens. Acrobates les comédiens sautent par dessus  
le vide laissé par le moi. Un tel détachement de soi pour  
rejoindre l'autre auquel on se prête tout entier...

<sup>24</sup>Hélène Cixous, 'Le chemin de légende' in *Théâtre*, (Paris, des femmes, 1976), pp.7-11 (p.7).

<sup>25</sup>Anne-Marie Picard criticises the play *L'Indiade ou L'Inde de leurs rêves* for its paucity of female characters and lack of potential identification for the female spectator in her article, 'L'Indiade ou L'Inde de leurs rêves', *Dalhousie French Studies* (1989), Vol. 17, pp.17-26 (p.23).

<sup>26</sup>Hélène Cixous, 'De la scène de l'inconscient à la scène de l'Histoire', p.31.

<sup>27</sup>*ibid.*, p.31.

<sup>28</sup>Hélène Cixous, 'Qui es-tu?' in *The Indiad* [...], p.277:

Et les indiens, qu'ils soient probes ou hâbleurs, sont  
d'une merveilleuse franchise. L'Inde entière est un théâtre.

<sup>29</sup>Hélène Cixous, 'Le Chemin de légende' in *Théâtre*, p.9:

Le théâtre peut nous rendre notre vraie dimension, nos  
profondeurs, nos hauteurs, nos Indes intérieures.

<sup>30</sup>Jennifer Birkett, 'The limits of language: The theatre of Hélène Cixous' in Dunkley and Kirton (eds), *Voices in the Air. French Dramatists and the Resources of Language*, (Glasgow, University of Glasgow French and German publications, 1992), pp.171-186 (p.183).

<sup>31</sup>Anne-Marie Picard, 'L'Indiade: Ariane's and Hélène's Conjugate Dreams', *Modern Drama* (1989), Vol. 31 (pp.24-38, p.34).

<sup>32</sup>*La Jeune Née*, p.130: 'L'autre n'est là que pour être réapproprié, repris, détruit en tant qu'autre.'

<sup>33</sup> Hélène Cixous, *L'Histoire (qu'on ne connaîtra jamais)* (Paris, des femmes, 1994).

<sup>34</sup> It is important to note that the French word 'histoire' means both narrative and history, an ambiguity which Cixous consciously exploits in her text.

<sup>35</sup> Hélène Cixous, programme notes to *L'Histoire (qu'on ne connaîtra jamais)*, 1994:

Ce que veut le poète: retrouver la vérité. Mais à la chercher, il se voit pris lui-même dans la toile qu'il regarde se tisser. Le passé qui était son objet de désir, le cède au présent [...] le voilà lui-même personnage du récit qu'il comptait faire. L'Histoire qu'il espérait raconter se jette sur lui et l'emporte.

<sup>36</sup> In her seminar of 27/5/94 Cixous revealed that she had inserted the character of Barout to enact revenge upon Wagner for his restrictive version of the narrative which excluded the other at all levels. The character is based upon a Jewish salesman who lodged at her grandmother's house. He later became a rabbi and was killed by Nazi troops during the war.

<sup>37</sup> Hélène Cixous, *L'Histoire (qu'on ne connaîtra jamais)*, pp.114-115:

Barout:

Entre vous et moi, Snorri Sturlusson, il m'a semblé entendre passer entre ces femmes une obscure musique de compassion.

Snorri:

Entre nous, Barout, j'ai cru l'entendre aussi.

<sup>38</sup> *ibid.*, p.116:

Snorri:

Rabbin, veux-tu m'aider à recommencer le monde?

Barout:

Si Dieu veut.



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<sup>39</sup>ibid., p.147:

Snorri:

Mes manuscrits! On m'a volé mon récit! Au secours! Mon oeuvre c'est ma chair, on m'a volé mes organes, mon coeur, mon cerveau!

Arminius:

Regarde le rabbin. Il est assis là-bas devant le feu. Qu'a-t-il donc entre les mains?

Snorri:

Lui!? Et toi Barout, tu as fait ça, à moi!?

<sup>40</sup>Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément, *La Jeune Née*, p.127:

[...] la distinction entre le propre, le mien, donc le bien et ce qui limite, or ce qui menace mon bien.

<sup>41</sup>*L'Histoire (qu'on ne connaîtra jamais)*, p.164:

Snorri:

Comme je suis fatigué de penser à nous

Etres humains incertains violents...

Nos mystères sont escarpés

Et je ne sais même plus qui est le personnage principal

De mon récit.

<sup>42</sup>It must be noted that *chemin* is the term frequently used by Cixous to describe her own journeys within writing.

<sup>43</sup>ibid., p.171:

Snorri:

Voici ma nuit, tout est dit.

Il n'est sur mon chemin désert, ni roi, ni reine, ni père.

Je vais enfin me reposer.

<sup>44</sup>Hélène Cixous, *L'Histoire (qu'on ne connaîtra jamais)*, p.184.

<sup>45</sup>In the programme notes, Daniel Mesguich, the director of the production at the Théâtre de l'Odéon in 1994, expresses his wish as he prepares to stage the play: '[...] for us, as actors, it will be a question of hearing and of making the writing of Hélène Cixous resound through us.'